

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT *UPDATE*

December 1999

Steering Virginia into the 21st Century

As Virginia's ship of state sails toward the year 2000, VDES will be in the pilothouse helping to steer it smoothly beyond the brink of the new millennium. Like a ship's wheel, a network of five interconnected, concurrent activities will monitor and maintain the state's operational status throughout the date change.

Emergency Operations Center

According to VDES Deputy State Coordinator George Foresman, the Virginia Emergency Operations Center or VEOC will be at the hub of this activity serving as a conduit for information flow and coordination of emergency/disaster operations should any Y2K related problems occur.

On Dec. 27, the VEOC will expand its 7-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day staffing using VDES permanent and reservist staff, personnel from other state agencies, volunteer organizations and the private sector to form the State Emergency Response Team.

In an agency first, VDES will run simultaneous and complementary staffing/operations for response at the VEOC and recovery at the Recovery Coordination Center (RCC) — also an around-the-clock operation.

Recovery Coordination Center

According to Foresman, the RCC will function much as a Disaster Field Office or DFO does in a disaster scenario with a focus on recovery of government agencies, local communities, industry and the private sector to normal activity levels.

As a DFO can only be established after a Presidential Disaster Declaration, this entity was created to perform these functions and serve as a policy-level advisory group to lay out a strategic approach to demands for



Behind the scenes. VDES Deputy State Coordinator George Foresman fields questions at a recent news conference. Public information will be a key component of state Y2K operations.

response and recovery resources on behalf of the Governor.

Other unique features of the state's Y2K operations are enhanced reporting requirements for localities and the potential for expanded use of alternate communications pathways. As with other emergencies, activities such as the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service or Civil Air Patrol will be ready to augment the telephone system in support of state/local emergency operations.

"We're going to treat Y2K as we would any other disaster or event with minor changes in reporting procedures," says VEOC Y2K Project Officer Steve Billcheck.

"The most important change to normal emergency operations is that we are going to request localities to begin communications pathway verification on a set schedule at one minute after midnight.

By 3:30 a.m., we hope to have reports from all regions confirming that the public switch telephone network is OK. They can fax these reports into the EOC or use RACES

or any other approved pathway. After the communications report, localities will then be asked to submit situation reports if needed as outlined in the Virginia Y2K Emergency Response and Recovery Plan."

Va. Information Coordination Center

In addition, Foresman says communication between local, state, and federal entities take place through VEOC coordination with the Virginia Information Coordination Center.

This state-level, information-gathering group managed by the Century Date Change Initiative office will take a broad-based approach to assessing how well Virginia's "business systems" are functioning in both the public and private sectors.

That information will then be forwarded to the President's Y2K Council via their Information Coordination Center. To further close the loop, Foresman adds that VDES will provide updates to FEMA who will also be in contact with the ICC.

Should any of these "business systems" experience a Y2K-related failure, the VEOC would then coordinate overall state and federal response and recovery activities to address problems caused by such a failure.

Finally, Foresman points out another subtle difference in the state approach to Y2K. In other disaster or emergency scenarios, Foresman explains the emphasis is normally on a vertical information exchange between the state and locality in which the state gathers status reports and coordinates assistance to respond to public safety issues.

In this situation, Foresman says a greater emphasis will be placed on the horizontal flow between the VEOC and the Joint Information Center and Public Inquiry Center who will disseminate this information to the public at large. *(continued on page 3)*

Taking out post-disaster trash

(Editor's Note: The following article is the first in a two-part series on debris management. In January, we will address the disposition of historic properties following a disaster.)

Once upon a time, there was a bustling little town near the banks of a lazy river. The people loved their town and were happy there until a terrible storm unleashed torrents of wind and rain that covered the houses and washed away the roads.

Then the good wizards from the state and federal kingdoms came and waved their magic wands to dry up all the water and return their town to its former glory. Then, they lived happily ever after ... or did they? Unfortunately, when a disaster or emergency strikes, there aren't any quick fairy tale fixes for the devastation that often remains.

In a survey of coastal U.S. communities, Langley and McDonald of Virginia Beach reported 47 percent of respondents lacked a written plan for dealing with debris from a natural disaster even though nearly as many (43 percent) had experienced more than one million dollars in storm damage in the last five years.

When the floodwaters of Hurricane Floyd receded, the city of Franklin fell into the above category as citizens were faced with piles of rubble where their downtown business district and homes had once been.

"We didn't have a debris management plan," says Franklin Director of Public Works Jamie Wiest. "We had a LEMOC (Local Emergency Management Operations Course) drill last year but didn't follow through with that part of it. We quickly found out that the debris management is the hardest, most expensive part."

With no plan in place, the city contacted VDES for state and federal assistance. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) took the lead in developing a study outlining a short-term infrastructure recovery plan for both Franklin and Southampton County.

VDHCD Deputy Director for Community Development Shea Hollifield says her agency had not previously been involved in these efforts but adds that their participation is part of a growing trend in emergency management to approach recovery in the context of overall community development.

VDES Chemical Emergency Preparedness Branch Manager George Roarty also



All piled up and no place to go. The city of Franklin had no plan in place for disposal of tons of debris resulting from Hurricane Floyd.

served on the task force and says an effective debris management plan is critical to providing timely access to the disaster area and allowing recovery efforts to begin.

After an initial contract fell through on the issue of temporary storage, Roarty says a number of agencies stepped in to jump-start the process.

The Department of Corrections and Virginia National Guard provided a work-force for debris removal and Virginia Department of Transportation crews were among the first in the area after the waters went down. According to VDOT Director of Emergency Operations Steve Mondul, they deployed the Suffolk District plus 24 Tiger Teams (20-30 persons and 10-12 pieces of equipment each) in the first two days.

With the path cleared, city officials still had to decide how to manage their recovery. According to Army Corps of Engineers' Environmental Protection Specialist Ramon Benitez, there are four approaches: the federal government can manage the project; the federal government can empower the locality to do it; the local government can manage the project; or these entities can take a hybrid approach. Funding can become an issue in each case.

After deciding on the hybrid approach, the city called the Corps of Engineers back in to help administer the project with Benitez as debris mission manager. After some initial problems, Roarty says the transition plan worked well — using four local contractors.

"We really didn't have enough time to write the contracts the way they should have been written," explains Weist. "It was frustrating because we spent a lot of time negotiating and it was hard to find enough people to come in and get the debris out."

"The scope of the devastation was significant in that it was concentrated downtown with over 180 stores in a historic district," says Roarty. "They were not only throwing away inventory but also stripping structures down to their frames due to the extent of the flooding. This generated waste flows of different categories of debris."

All this waste had to go somewhere and Benitez shaped those decisions. Regardless of the size of the project, he says there is a proven approach to cleanup that starts with decisions about disposition of these materials.

"The key to the whole process is thinking first about the ultimate disposal of the debris before you start collecting it," says Benitez. "In Franklin, we had 10,000 tons of waste plus 1,000 tons of steel and 9,600 tons of concrete brick and block recovered from demolition. I knew block and steel were the only things we could recoup any money from, so we recycled the last two categories."

Expertise and resources are available at the state and federal levels for localities that need to develop debris plans. Roarty says the annex in the sample local EOP is a good starting point. It is based on the state debris management annex. Both need to be regularly reviewed/revised based on lessons learned.

For more information, contact George Roarty at (804) 897-6500.

Debris Management Tool Kit

Virginia Beach can and has served as an example for other localities. Art Shaw, operations engineer for the city's Department of Public Works, cites four features of a successful debris management plan:

1. Pre-positioned, pre-awarded contracts (unit priced for best value).
2. Identify several large city or other government-owned plots of land that can be turned into temporary debris storage and reduction sites and develop layout plans for each site.
3. Assign staff to crews and assign them to pre-designated sections of the city.
4. Identify several sturdy city-owned structures with limited exterior doors and windows that can be used as pre-positioning sites for crews and equipment.

HAZ MAT



Hazmat on the high seas

by Ray Haring, VDES Hazmat Officer

Who's in charge here? This jurisdictional quandary was just one of many issues hazmat officers had to address recently when responding to a shipboard fire off the coast of Virginia Beach.



It all began on Oct. 31 when Bill Burket, director of the Virginia Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT), contacted the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) to request assistance with hazmat concerns associated with the fire. I headed to Virginia Beach while Hazmat Officer Richard Parker went to Norfolk to work with the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office.

When I joined the three-member MIRT assessment crew on a pilot launch boat for the 90-minute trip to the Liberian registered vessel, *Hoegh Duke*, we began a four-day refresher course in maritime customs and laws.

The Captain at the helm. Though he may not take the wheel, the captain directs and controls shipboard activities. The first lesson we had to remember was that, unlike a structure fire or hazmat incident, the fire chief was not in charge aboard ship. Given the ship's registration and its location in international waters, we worked at the will and pleasure of the captain with no authority aboard the vessel.

Speaking the same language. During this incident, communication was hampered in two important ways. Though the captain and first mate spoke English, most of the crew did not. This scenario could replay on any international vessel. Secondly, terms for the anatomy of a ship are much different than those used on land (i.e., *port*, *starboard*, *fore* and *aft* replace left, right, forward and rear).

Safeguarding passengers. Though it was classified as a cargo ship, there were also passengers onboard taking a cruise. Segregating and protecting this population presented a unique challenge as personnel were initially unsure of the fire's exact location. A thermal imaging camera allowed us to identify hot spots and gauge temperatures by looking at specific areas through the camera.

Fight fire with ... carbon dioxide. Though the ship was in an ocean full of water, the fire was fought using carbon dioxide, which displaces air, suffocates the fire and causes no runoff. Consisting of massive amounts of Latex rubber and plywood, this fire appeared to have been extinguished on several occasions, only to rekindle again. Consequently, truckloads of carbon dioxide were purchased commercially to recharge the onboard system.

Learning the team lineup. The planning and coordination needed to bring the fire under control required the expertise of numerous agencies including the U.S. Coast Guard; MIRT; Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Amoco Oil Refinery; and fire departments from Norfolk Naval Base and the cities of Norfolk and Chesapeake. Attorneys for the ship owners and marine surveyor groups for the cargo owners were also on the scene as observers.

Though incidents of this magnitude do not occur often, responders need to be aware of the differences between nautical and mainland disasters and take time to critique issues/lessons learned from these unique incidents.

Steering (continued from page 1)

"We don't think there will be as much need for an operational emphasis as there will be for public affairs activities," says Foresman.

"We will be capable of assessing information and putting it out to the public as quickly as possible."

Joint Information and Public Inquiry Centers

The Joint Information Center, located in the VEOC, will be the information source for the public and media concerning state emergency operations. VDES Public Affairs Director Janet Clements says the JIC will consist of VDES staff, reservists and a contingent of state public information officers who typically have response roles in an emergency.

The Public Inquiry Center, which is part of the JIC, will provide a coordinated communication network for identifying and dispelling public rumors, correcting misinformation, and answering questions to promote public confidence. Clements says the PIC will have 10 phone lines staffed with VDES employees, reservists and Department of Motor Vehicles representatives.

She emphasizes that the PIC is not intended to usurp or replace local response efforts. The VDES Public Affairs Office has sent out a survey to update local public information contacts so every effort can be made to direct inquiries to the appropriate level.

Knowledge is Power

Though public and private sector agencies say they are ready, no one really knows what will happen during and after the date change. According to John A. Koskinen, chairman of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion, the greatest domestic risks for Y2K-related failures are at the local level. As Americans seek updates on how the services they rely upon may be affected, the dissemination of accurate, dependable information becomes even more critical.

"Suppose a driver hits a utility pole coming home from a New Year's Eve party and knocks out power to a widespread area or an ATM machine malfunctions (as they are sometimes prone to do)," explains Foresman. "We want to tell people what is happening and why as quickly as possible. In essence, we will manage the 'emergency' by managing information."

A 'Flood' of generosity

Proving flood relief does come in a "can" (and a cash register), Hardee's company and franchised restaurants in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina collected \$335,059 to benefit victims of Hurricane Floyd.

Funds were almost equally divided between collections from canisters on store counters throughout the U.S. and sales of the Hardee's Famous Star Burger Oct. 8-11 in these three states.

Funds were allocated based on the number of homes flooded. Virginia received approximately \$35,000 of the total amount and will funnel these funds through local recovery task forces to help individuals and communities in their flood recovery efforts.



Steve Black, Boddie-Noell Enterprises vice president of sales and service, presents the donation to VDES State Coordinator Michael Cline.

Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness
January 11-13/Virginia Beach

Disaster Related Needs of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities
January 26/Williamsburg

Basic Public Information Officer Course
February 2-4/Richmond

Decision Making in a Crisis
February 8/Richmond

Coordinator's Briefing
February 10/Williamsburg

Emergency Planning Workshop
February 15-17/Virginia Beach

ISC/EOC Interface
February 23-24/Newport News

Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness
Feb. 29-March 2/Charlottesville

Reservist Training

Rapid Assessment Workbook Overview
January 14/Richmond

VEOC Message/Mission Flow Exercise
February 2/Richmond

VEOC Tabletop Exercise
February 3/Richmond

Emergency Information System (EIS) Training
February 3/Richmond

Reservist Program Orientation
February 23/Richmond

Information and Planning Branch Workshops
February 29/Richmond

Technological Hazards

Chemistry of Hazardous Materials
February 7-18/TBA

Search and Rescue

GSAR Institute (Part I)
January 21-22/Blue Ridge

SAR Council
January 29/Richmond

Field Team Member (Part I)
February 11-13/Newport News

Inland SAR School
February 14-18/Yorktown

GSAR Institute (Part II)
February 25-27/Blue Ridge

Correction: In our last issue, we inadvertently relocated the woman in our cover photo to the city of Franklin. This flood victim is actually a resident of the Zuni community which experienced severe flood damage to about 22 homes, several small businesses and a church. Our best wishes go out to her and other Isle of Wight County flood victims.

The Latest "Update"

Making an impact. Congratulations to the city of Chesapeake on becoming the newest Virginia Project Impact community. Chesapeake joins the cities of Roanoke and Virginia Beach in promoting education and mitigation efforts with the ultimate goal of becoming disaster resistant.

Gone but not forgotten. Region II Coordinator, Curt Nellis, departed in September to accept a position as Shenandoah County's first director of fire and rescue. He joined the agency in 1993 overseeing preparedness and response activities for the 47 county area. Though he worked out of the Culpeper field office, he was a highly visible presence throughout VDES and will be sorely missed.

Sharing the wealth. VDES bids a fond farewell this month to Michael Schlemmer. An instructor with the Technical Hazards Division since 1994, Schlemmer says he has learned a lot through the agency's teamwork approach to developing hazmat training and will use that knowledge on the local level in his new position as the emergency services coordinator for Louisa County.

VEM Conference blazes into 2000



"Igniting the Power of Partnerships"

March 20-22, 2000

The Marriott Hotel and Conference Center
Williamsburg, Va.

- * Learn from nationally known experts exploring the interactions between disasters and communities.
 - * Participate in a variety of workshops covering weather science; creative approaches to disaster education and response; community-wide recovery efforts; and a showcase for outstanding local efforts.
 - * Network and interact with in-state and out-of state colleagues.
- \$100 for members and \$135 for non-members. Call (757) 474-3096, e-mail: mary.powell14@gte.net or visit the VDES Web site at www.vdes.state.va.us.



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